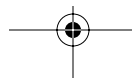
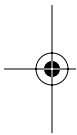


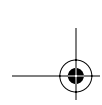
PREFACE



In a sense, writing this book has been an attempt to be totally honest about my religious beliefs for the first time in forty years. I graduated from seminary forty years ago; and ever since, I have been able to avoid facing the full consequences of what I truly believe—and what I can't believe. Since I never became a full-time minister to a congregation but instead went to medical school and became a physician, I never had to examine what I believed thoroughly enough to allow me to be a person of spiritual integrity day in and day out. In other words, I was able to have it both ways: I could believe what was comfortable and useful in my mostly secular life without having to test it in the fires of real spiritual struggle to determine what I actually believed—and what that belief required of me in the choices of my daily life.

Not that I tried to hide the fact that I was a clergyman. Indeed, it is well known to most of my colleagues in medicine and media that I am a believer and a minister. That's why they have often come to me for spiritual as well as medical advice—and why I am often asked to perform weddings for friends and colleagues. I never tried to hide this part of my background—but I never had to take full responsibility for how my beliefs should shape my everyday life. And I have always been able to move easily between my secular and spiritual lives





without having to completely blend them in a manner that would cause me any pain or sacrifice.

With the writing of this book, that will no longer be possible. I am now compelled to face my beliefs with candor and confession. The task both frightens and excites me. I know some who admire my secular achievements will be turned off by this spiritual exploration—and some who admire my spiritual stance will be disappointed in my conclusions. At this point in my life, I am finally willing to take those chances. As the saying goes, better late than never.

Here's to asking questions.

